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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 4885  
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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1423  
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RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 3656  
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 1869  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 4748  
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 1421  
RUEHLI/AMEMBASSY LISBON 0111  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0753  
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0885  
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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 005107

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [TH](#) [BM](#) [RP](#) [SN](#) [IN](#) [CH](#)

SUBJECT: ENGAGING ASEAN AND OTHERS ON BURMA

REF: A. SINGAPORE 1751 (AMB RAISES BURMA)

- [1](#)B. RANGOON 910 (PROTESTS GATHER MOMENTUM)
- [1](#)C. JAKARTA 2693 (PRESSING FOR ACTION ON BURMA)
- [1](#)D. BANGKOK 5036 (THAI FM ON BURMA AND MORE)
- [1](#)E. BEIJING 6075 (BEIJING READY FOR MORE TALKS)

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Classified By: Ambassador Ralph L. Boyce, reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Embassy Bangkok stands ready to continue to urge the Thai government to press the Burmese authorities to release political prisoners and engage in genuine dialogue to pave the way for a transition to a civilian, democratic government. Septel will report the Ambassador's latest conversation with the RTG on Burma, but we note (as reported in ref D) that Foreign Minister Nitya does not appear eager to mobilize the RTG to support our policy on Burma. Given this reluctance, we believe that the Thais would be more responsive if we launch a high-level initiative to encourage a focused diplomatic effort by ASEAN that could take place in conjunction with the formation of a larger "Friends of Burma" group.

[1](#)2. (C) We would support a Department decision to lobby ASEAN to revive its Troika (consisting of the past, present and future ASEAN Chairs -- in this case, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand) to play a leading role in this matter. We believe that ASEAN has much to lose if it is seen as standing by idly while Burma appears poised for a violent crackdown. We noted Embassy Singapore's cable (ref A) indicating that the Singaporean government may have lukewarm feelings about focusing critical attention on Burma, in part because of Singapore's efforts to ensure the signing of the

ASEAN Charter. However, we fail to see how ASEAN can hope this Charter, which lauds democratic principles and human rights, will be credible if the Burmese government signs in the current environment.

¶3. (C) We believe ASEAN may be encouraged to mobilize its Troika if it is understood that the Troika would play a meaningful role in a larger diplomatic endeavor. Specifically, we would suggest consideration of the establishment of a "Friends of Burma" group, similar to the "Friends of Cambodia" group formed after the 1997 crisis in Cambodia. We envision a gathering by the U.S., China, India, Japan, the ASEAN Troika, the E.U., Russia, the U.N., Australia, and possibly others to show concern over conditions in Burma and the way forward.

¶4. (C) We note China's strong leverage vis-a-vis Burma, and China's willingness (ref E) to host a second round of U.S.-Burma talks. While we defer fully to the Department's view on the desirability (or lack thereof) of another round of such talks in the current environment, we hope that China's interest in the matter might also make it more willing to play a productive role in multilateral dialogue. Chinese Embassy officials in Bangkok have raised with us their interest in hosting further bilateral U.S.-Burma talks.

¶5. (C) While we understand the importance of engaging India on Burma, our own recent experience gave little cause for optimism. On September 14, during a visit to Thailand by Indian Minister for External Affairs Pranab Mukherjee, the Ambassador attended a speech Mukherjee delivered at Chulalongkorn University. During the question and answer period, the Ambassador and several others in the diplomatic corps urged Mukherjee to use India's leverage to improve conditions in Burma. Mukherjee responded that India would

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uphold its "cardinal principle" of non-interference in other countries' domestic affairs.

¶6. (C) We understand that a "Friends of Burma" group may not be able to meet in the very near future, given the need to build consensus among a diverse range of actors so that the meeting could generate an acceptable communique. Even the mere creation of the group, however, might help energize ASEAN and its Troika. We also would welcome Embassy Rangoon's assessment of whether the formation of a multilateral group in which its key neighbors would participate would by itself usefully increase diplomatic pressure on the regime.

¶7. (SBU) We took note of Embassy Rangoon's cable (ref B) encouraging other posts' consideration of ways to increase awareness of conditions in Burma. We would encourage public diplomacy officers in Rangoon or Washington to locate or produce short video presentations (three to six minutes in length) that provide accurate, emotionally compelling -- perhaps even graphic -- accounts of conditions in Burma. Public diplomacy personnel here in Bangkok could then add subtitles in Thai and assist in the posting of these clips online and distribution to contacts by e-mail or DVD. We believe this would be the most effective way for us to get our message out to a broader audience.

BOYCE